

OXFORDSHIRE APPROACH TO BREAKING CYCLES OF DEPRIVATION

Introduction

The development of the “Oxfordshire Model” for breaking deprivation will provide national as well as county-level guidance. This is because research into study reports on deprivation has shown that:

- To date, there is no agreed single cycle of deprivation
- There is no published clarity around the range of different cycles – individual, generational, neighbourhood
- Consequently there is no published toolkit yet for breaking these cycles

“(Researchers’) understandable reluctance to offer answers around causal processes, or more specifically to do with pathways and mechanisms, has created a space in which alternative policy prescriptions can flourish. This means that alongside the focus on social exclusion, child poverty, and inter-generational continuities in economic status, there is a parallel and increasing emphasis on anti-social behaviour, parenting, and problem families.”

(Dr John Welshman, Lancaster University 2006)

In the absence of a received model for a cycle of deprivation, it is important to base a focused programme for Oxfordshire on the evidence from past area-based initiatives. This evidence suggests there are two main issues:

1. **Poverty** – a good income is the real guard against deprivation
2. **Neighbourhood** – areas of entrenched deprivation need to change to become places where people wish to stay when they do have a good income

In places where the location of the neighbourhood means less available employment, these two issues are closely connected.

“The balance of the evidence from the national evaluation of SRB (*single regeneration budget initiatives*) is that if depressed areas are to turn their fortunes around then they have to overcome the market and mainstream failures described above. This requires three key components:

- Enhance the *core competencies or attributes* of the area and residents so that it is a relatively attractive place for businesses to want to invest in and people to live in;
- Bring together the relevant *agents of change* from across all sectors be it the government, businesses, voluntary sector stakeholders or residents to work together to address the problems concerned; and
- To do so by adopting a *strategic* approach.”

(Rhodes, Tyler & Brennan et al 2007)

As the success or failure of breaking cycles of deprivation will be measured at neighbourhood level, and as each neighbourhood is different, it follows that each target area will need its own vision of how it will look when changed. The common focus needed to break cycles of deprivation means that each local vision will show a common pattern:

A Place To Work

- A variety of real opportunities for sustainable employment, greater than the number of local people needing work, and either provided locally or through travel to work
- Clear career routes to this employment, including information from employers about vacancies, access to the necessary foundation and vocational skills training, and planning and other policies to ensure local residents are given suitable priority
- Good access to adequate services to address any barriers to employment, including health services, childcare and debt counselling

A Place To Live

- Good quality mixed housing, affordable for all income levels, and set in a well-managed environment
- Good access to amenities, including shops, health centres and leisure facilities
- Good community cohesion and community safety, including vibrant community activities and local governance, with low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour

Banbury and Oxford have already developed their own strategies, which nevertheless reflect this common pattern around poverty and neighbourhood. The work to deliver this pattern will form the basis for the Oxfordshire Model, and from July 2010 onwards progress will be reported at www.oxfordpartnership.org.uk, the website of the Oxfordshire Local Strategic Partnership.

Critical factors

A fuller report is available, but in summary, research suggests that the critical factors to break cycles of deprivation are:

- All agencies need to be engaged to co-ordinate their mainstream activities in the target areas, particularly at family level to help address people-based issues.
- An equal effort needs to be made to identify and deliver radical changes that will improve long-term working and living prospects in the target areas, and boost local confidence
- Local people need to be involved throughout this process to be partners in decision-making as well as in joint working, and to take the lead in their own futures

AM 7.7.10